

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SITE R10/1126, SILVERDALE



**REPORT TO  
FOODSTUFFS (AUCKLAND) LTD  
AND  
THE NEW ZEALAND HISTORIC PLACES TRUST**

**GREG GEDSON**

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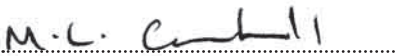
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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SITE R10/1126, SILVERDALE

GREG GEDSON

Archaeological investigation of site R10/1126 was carried out on 25–27 January 2011 as part of the larger investigation in the area for Foodstuffs (Auckland) Ltd and Auckland Council, which mainly concentrated on the R10/1125, the Butler Stoney House, to the east. Foodstuffs are developing a supermarket on the site and Auckland Council are extending East Coast Road in order to accommodate the increased traffic. R10/1126 is in the path of this roadworks. Excavation was carried out under authority 2006/7 issued under Section 14 of the Historic Places Act 1993 by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

The site was located on a north west facing, gently sloping hillside approximately 200 m below and to the north west of Silverdale Road. The site had been previously recorded as a house site that was visible as two levelled terrace areas, the lower of which appeared to contain a concrete pad. The area was covered in medium to long grass with a small amount of rusted metal and other general rubbish being noted, along with more from the recently demolished house approximately 75 metres to the east, visible in Figure 1. The site had been marked out with hi-visibility safety



1. Excavated areas of R10/1125, the Butler Stoney House, and R10/1126. The inset (below) shows the location of the main image (red) and archaeological sites recorded in the wider area.





mesh fence which encompassed a roughly rectangular 25 x 15 m area. Upon topsoil stripping the site appeared to continue towards the north east so the marked off area to investigate was roughly doubled so as to include this.

### Methodology

Topsoil stripping was carried out with a 12 tonne hydraulic excavator equipped with a 1.8 m weed bucket on a tilt attachment under archaeological supervision. The complete site area was stripped of grass and topsoil. Following this a team of three cleaned down the exposed surface and features by hand. The surface was cleaned down with spades where necessary and any features marked out. The features were excavated by half sectioning and drains by excavating part sections 400–900 mm long to reveal their profile and depth.

Overview photographs were taken throughout the excavation, along with others of any features of interest. The excavated area was mapped by tape and compass and this was located in NZTM. A selection of artefacts, both from topsoil removal surface collections and selected features, were bagged for later analysis. After the site was recorded the excavator removed the building platform aggregate and concrete pad; these appear to have been laid over natural clay with no evidence of previous activity.

Weather during the excavation was generally fine. Recent rain and the clay soils combined to initially make conditions slippery underfoot and the drains quite muddy; this dried out as the excavation progressed.

### Results

Topsoil stripping revealed a large amount of rusted metal and rubbish both within and under the mainly thin layer of topsoil and grass. The topsoil varied in depth from a few mm up to 200 mm. A diverse range of objects and materials were observed which included metal objects (with a large number of horse shoes), glass, ceramic, wood and plastic along with occasional bricks, and rough aggregate fills.

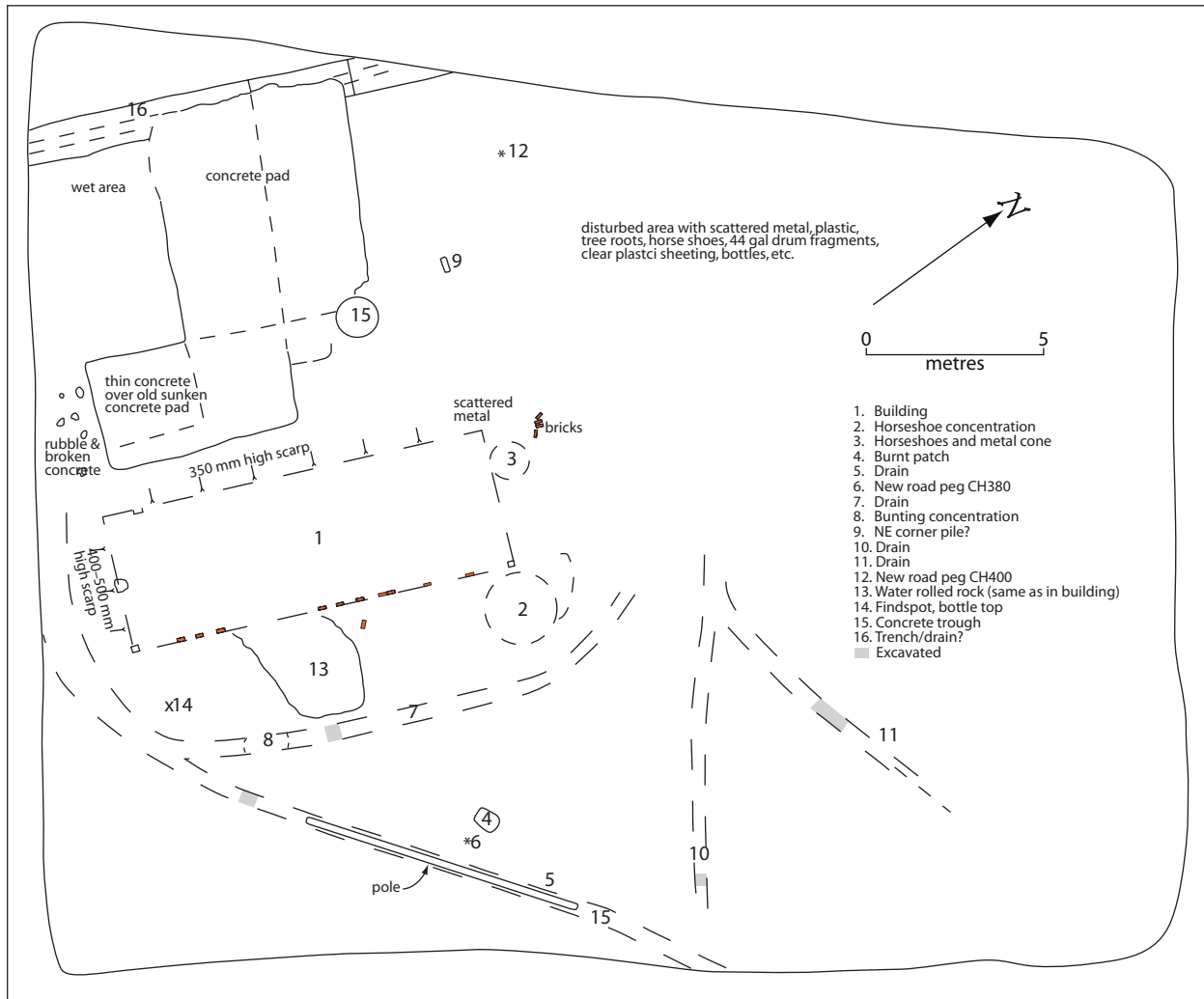
The two terraces initially observed on the surface were revealed as a small building platform on the upper terrace and a concrete pad on the lower terrace (Figures 2 and 3). Surrounding these was a series of open drains which contained large amounts of rubbish. The drains continued up slope for an undetermined distance but became less deep. They ran down slope and appeared to feed in to a larger north east–south west sloping drain at the north edge of the concrete pad on the lower terrace. This drain in turn flowed to the south west and terminated in a disturbed wet and swampy area just outside the excavation area. The extended area to the north east contained some drains but mainly mixed and disturbed rubbish. Apart from the drains distinctive subsurface features were minimal.

2. The upper terrace building platform with the lower terrace concrete pad in the foreground.



#### *Upper Terrace*

The upper terrace contained an 11 x 3.5 m rectangular building platform oriented across the north west facing slope. The building was outlined with concrete piles at the corners, along with an alignment of irregularly placed bricks laid length-wise as part of the foundations along the south east



3. Plan of excavated features.

wall, and the remains of a foundation trench along the north west wall. The insubstantial nature of these foundations indicates a simple farm shed or outbuilding.

Horse shoes were scattered over the site but the majority were within two concentrations at the north (Feature 3) and east (Features 2) corners of the building platform (Figure 4). This possibly indicates an entrance at this end with the shoes piled to either side of it. A large amount of other metal remains was uncovered around and approximately 3 m down slope from Feature 3 at the north corner. The horse shoes were of various sizes, some were quite small or quite large, but the majority observed were of average size. The large number of shoes, the variety of sizes and the disposal pattern indicate that a farrier was operating on site.

A variety of objects were recovered from the building platform along the foundations. This indicates that tools and miscellaneous material were hung on the walls as storage, which is what would be expected in a shed, which then fell down over time as the building collapsed or was deconstructed. The area within the foundations of the building, along with a small area to the south, was covered in a rolled river cobble aggregate which appeared to be the floor of the building. The continuation of this floor outside and to the south may also indicate another entrance.



4. Some of the excavated horse shoes and other metal material.

### *Lower Terrace*

The lower terrace was approximately 0.5 m lower than the upper and contained a gently sloping concrete pad. This was made up of three or four separately laid pads with some additional concrete to fill areas that appear to have slumped. There was no sign of any building or fence associated with the concrete area.

A small round concrete trough made with corrugated exterior and smooth interior boxing was incorporated in to the south eastern corner of the pad. This was filled with a variety of rubbish including rocks and bricks but also numerous short-neck

ABC beer bottles and small Fanta bottles. It was unusual that it was sunk in to the ground by 500 mm with the top at ground level, indicating a use other than stock water supply; for this the trough would have been high enough (approximately 60cm) to allow stock drinking access and to reduce stock and debris ingress. This trough may have been utilised as a water supply related to the farrier operations.

After lifting the concrete pad it was revealed to have been laid on various base courses, including an area of fine crusher dust, some sterile clay and towards the north a mixed aggregate of rock and broken brick. No further modification was evident below these.

### *Drains*

These were shallow open drains of around 300–500 mm in width and 150–300 mm in depth. All appeared to be hand dug, cut into natural clay and used for control of rain water run-off. They were contemporaneous with the building and concrete pad and would have guided water around and away from these. As they continued from further upslope it is likely they were also used to drain other areas.

The majority of the drains were filled with a variety of rubbish which was often in distinct concentrations. These concentrations included what appeared to be broken fluorescent light tubes, sheet metal, bottles, plastic shop window display bunting, and a 6 m long wooden pole, probably a telephone pole. The concentrations point to discrete dumping events, possibly after disuse of the building.

The larger drain at the down slope edge of the concrete pad was sectioned by the digger and by hand after the concrete pad was removed. This drain differed from the other drains (apart from its larger size) in running across slope (from north east to south west) and it contained only minimal rubbish consisting of a few small fragments of ceramic and brick. The drain continued to the north east for an undetermined distance and terminated to the south west at a disturbed wet and swampy area. Though there was no firm evidence to support this, the drain may have pre-dated the other features, with the later drains utilising the low ground it provided.

### *Artefacts*

The collected artefacts were catalogued and analysed. Most of the material recovered indicated an age of post 1930s. Only three glass bottle fragments were possibly earlier but these could only be assigned to early 20th century.



5. A selection of typical artefacts from the site.

The mixed nature of the artefact material and the obvious dumping and disturbance make it difficult to give definite interpretation. Much of the material may not relate directly to the use of the farm shed but may have been expediently dumped in the available drains.

Of the on-site material uncovered of note was the large quantity of metal, the most common of which was horse shoes with approximately 800 plus in total counted. Further metal, and other materials, included various automotive, mechanical, farming and household related items.

### Discussion and conclusion

Dating to the 20th century, the site is not protected under the provisions of the Historic Places Act, which defines archaeological sites as pre-dating 1900. It is recorded as a site in the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) site file, as NZAA does not recognise any cut-of date for defining archaeological sites. This late date for the site was not apparent until excavation and was only confirmed through analysis of the artefacts, which all appear to be from the 1930s and later. This rubbish was probably dumped after the abandonment, or reduction in use, of the building area. The spread of material on the surface combined with later disturbance makes firm interpretation difficult. The clay soils and wet conditions during excavation illustrate the necessity of the number of drains uncovered.

The above ground structures don't appear to have been particularly substantial. The large number of horse shoes along with the size variation and deposition indicates the use of the building as a farriers and possibly stables. A variety of further uses are possible, the large amount of metal may indicate some metal-working related activities. In general, this is a typical sort of farm outbuilding, probably associated with the house previously located to the east, since demolished but visible in Figure 1.